

Education

Access to affordable, quality education is critical to the economic vitality of our nation. To help prepare Americans for success in college and careers, Sen. Brown has consistently advocated for job training programs for high-demand fields and affordable post-secondary options for all qualified individuals.

Providing Job Training to our Nation's Youth

Youth unemployment continues to exceed general unemployment rates. To provide more opportunities to young people, Sen. Brown introduced the *Youth Corps Act of 2012*. This legislation would amend the *Workforce Investment Act* to enable states and local communities to replicate and strengthen the Youth Corps model of success, which connects qualified young people with education and a supportive workplace in their communities.

In the Youth Corps model, adult leaders serve as mentors and guide crews of 8-12 Corps members as they gain the paid work experience and develop strong work ethic skills in the workplace. Corps members also receive a living allowance, classroom instruction to improve basic academic competencies, complete high school, and prepare for postsecondary education, and a wide range of supportive services. Additionally, they participate in technical skills training and leadership development.

Through this legislation, Sen. Brown is fighting to ensure Youth Corps programs across the country are able to leverage their existing resources and ensure that all young adults are provided with the skills they need for success.

Convening the Fifth Annual College Presidents Conference

In March, Sen. Brown hosted the fifth Ohio College Presidents' Conference – an annual gathering of Ohio's college and university presidents in Washington D.C. – to discuss common goals and challenges facing our academic institutions.

The conference agenda was developed with the assistance of the conference host committee – a group of ten college presidents from across the state. With Jamie Merisotis of the Lumina Foundation as the keynote speaker, the conference addressed the need to produce more college graduates across the state.

Other featured speakers included John Holdren, Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, who discussed the need to encourage students to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics and how such



an investment could lead to stronger communities and a stronger nation. The conference also included Sen. Rob Portman, representatives of the Ohio House Delegation, and member of the White House Domestic Policy Council.

Making College More Affordable

College costs continue to climb at a rate surpassing inflation, even as the need for post-secondary education is increasingly important for an individual's financial stability and our nation's economic health. However, because of legislation that passed as part of the 2007 *College Cost Reduction and Access Act*, interest rates for subsidized Stafford loans for undergraduate students was capped at 3.4 percent. Without Congressional action, these loans would have doubled to 6.8 percent in July when the cap expired. Such an increase would have affected nearly 382,000 students in Ohio and led to an additional \$1,000 in student loan debt per subsidized Stafford loan.



To address this pressing issue, Sen. Brown fought to keep student loan interest rates for borrowers at 3.4 percent. In April, Sen. Brown introduced the *Stop the Student Loan Interest Rate Hike Act of 2012*, which would maintain the interest rate at 3.4 percent for one additional year. Through the advocacy of Sen. Brown and his colleagues, this legislation – which was fully paid for – passed both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate and was signed into law by President Obama in July.

Addressing Private Student Loan Debt

Prior to the 2008 economic collapse, the private student loan market grew at a rapid rate. During the 2007-2008 the academic year, 14 percent of undergraduates used private student loans an increase from just 5 percent in 2003 and 2004. Private student loans are the riskiest way to pay for college. Often, these loans come with a variable interest rates ranging from five percent to more than 18 percent with no limit on origination and other fees. The reason for such a drastic increase in lending can be attributed to multiple factors – the growing cost of college and stagnant aggregate federal loan limits, easily available credit for borrowers, and predatory lending practices by student loan lenders.

As a result of these factors, borrowers are now burdened with nearly \$150 billion in private student loan debt with limited relief options. Unlike federal loans, private student loans do not come with flexible repayment rates or loan forgiveness options. Additionally, unlike other private debt, private student loans are not dischargeable in bankruptcy.

To help make college more affordable for middle-class and low-income families, Sen. Brown, who chairs the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Protections, held a hearing to examine ways to provide relief to private student loan borrowers in the student loan market.

This hearing coincided with the Department of Education's and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) release of a report on the private student loan market. Rohit Chopra testified at the hearing on behalf of the CFPB's Student Loan Ombudsman – a department that will provide private student loan borrowers with a central location to make complaints about their private student loans.

Sen. Brown played a crucial role in the establishment of the Student Loan Ombudsman, which passed as part of the *Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act*.